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UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 1

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UNCLASSIFIED PTQ2037

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 03435 01 OF 02 162008Z
ACTION INL-00

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INFO LOG-00 NP-00 AEX-00 WHA-00 DS-00 EAP-00 OIGO-00
FBIE-00 UTED-00 VC-00 H-01 TEDE-00 INR-00 VCE-00
AC-01 DCP-01 ACE-00 TEST-00 ASDS-01 DSCC-00 NFAT-00
SAS-00 /004W

-----8724DE 162009Z /38

R 162008Z APR 02
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8176
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
NSC WASHDC
DOSAIRWING PATRICK AFB FL
DIA WASHDC//NMJIC//
USCINCSO MIAMI FL//SCCC/SCJ2/SCJ3/SCJ5//
DIRONDCP WASHDC
CIA WASHDC//CNC//
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY GRENADA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 003435

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E.O. 12958: N/A

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 03435 01 OF 02 162008Z
TAGS: OVIP PHUM PTER PGOV SNAR PREL CO
SUBJECT: VISIT OF CODEL BALLENGER

REF: A) BOGOTA 00223 B) BOGOTA 00308 C) 00390 AND
PREVIOUS

1. REPRESENTATIVE CASS BALLENGER, REPUBLICAN OF NORTH
CAROLINA, LED A DELEGATION TO COLOMBIA APRIL 2-4, 2002,
ACCOMPANIED BY DEMOCRATIC MEMBER OF CONGRESS ENI
FALEOMAVEAGA OF AMERICAN SAMOA, BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT
W. SULLIVAN, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS FOR U.S.

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 1

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
DATE/CASE ID: 02 JUL 2004 200303455

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SOUTHERN COMMAND, AND SEVERAL CONGRESSIONAL STAFF. THE DELEGATION MET WITH THE EMBASSY COUNTRY TEAM; VICE PRESIDENT AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE GUSTAVO BELL; ARMED FORCES COMMANDER GENERAL FERNANDO TAPIAS; VICE MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION FEDERMAN QUIROGA RIOS; AND PETROLEUM INDUSTRY LEADERS. THE FOCUS OF THE VISIT WAS THE POSSIBLE SHIFT IN USG POLICY FROM COUNTERNARCOTICS ALONE TO BOTH COUNTERNARCOTICS AND COUNTERTERRORISM. END SUMMARY.

MINISTRY OF DEFENSE: COUNTERTERRORISM FOCUS

2. THE DELEGATION MET APRIL 3 WITH VICE PRESIDENT AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE GUSTAVO BELL AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES GENERAL FERNANDO TAPIAS. BOTH REPRESENTATIVES ACKNOWLEDGED THE COMMITMENT OF COLOMBIA'S ARMED FORCES IN COMBATING TERRORISM AND NOTED (WITHOUT BEING SPECIFIC) THAT WASHINGTON WAS CONSIDERING EXPANDING ITS ASSISTANCE TO COLOMBIA TO INCLUDE COUNTERTERRORISM ASSISTANCE. REP. BALLENGER ALSO EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT UPCOMING CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS ON FARC-IRA TIES WOULD

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 03435 01 OF 02 162008Z
RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE NATURE OF TERRORISM IN COLOMBIA. ONE OF THE STAFFERS INVITED TAPIAS TO TESTIFY AT THE HEARING. TAPIAS SAID HE WOULD DO SO IF THE PRESIDENT SO INSTRUCTED.

3. GENERAL TAPIAS SAID THAT COLOMBIA'S MILITARY, ALTHOUGH IT FACES A TOUGH BATTLE WITH SCARCE RESOURCES, REMAINS FIRM IN ITS RESOLVE AND IS PURSUING AN EFFECTIVE LONG-TERM STRATEGY. TAPIAS LAUDED U.S. COOPERATION TO REDUCE THE FLOW OF ARMS AND PRECURSOR CHEMICALS AND TO COMBAT MONEY LAUNDERING, BUT SAID THAT MORE COUNTRIES NEED TO BECOME INVOLVED. (NOTE: HE EXPRESSED PUZZLEMENT OVER SITZERLAND'S RECENT REFUSAL TO FREEZE GUERRILLA ASSETS IN SWISS ACCOUNTS. END NOTE.) TAPIAS EMPHASIZED THAT THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY DOES NOT EXPECT HE U.S. TO FIGHT ITS WAR, BUT HOPES TO RECEIVE TECHNICAL, MOBILITY, AND INTELLIGENCE ASSISTANCE I ORDER TO SPARE LIVES IN COMBAT.

4. TAPIAS CONTINUED WITH A DETAILED BRIEFING ON THE RECENT HITORY OF THE ILLEGAL ARMED GROUPS AND THE MILITAR'S STRATEGY, EMPHASIZING THAT THE CONFLICT NOW HS ECONOMIC, RATHER THAN IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS. HE TRESSED THAT NARCOTRAFFICKING HAS CONTRIBUTED TO EXPLOSIVE GROWTH OF THE FARC, AUC AND ELN SINCE THE 1980'S, NOTING THAT ALL THREE GROUPS ENJOY ONLY INIMAL

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 2002BOGOTA03435

Page: 3

Channel: n/a

POPULARSUPPORT. THEREFORE, COUNTERNARCOICS OPERATIONS
AND ANTI-KIDNAPPING OPERATIONS REAIN KEY TO THE
COLOMBIAN STRATEGY TO UNDERMINE ILEGAL ARMED GROUPS'
FINANCES AND FORCE THEM TO TH NEGOTIATING TABLE. THE
MILITARY'S VISION IS TO ODERNIZE ITS OPERATIONS,

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 BOGOTA 03435 01 OF 02 162008Z
PROFESSIONALIZE ITS FORES, AND STRENGTHEN PROTECTION FOR
COLOMBIA'S INFAStructure AND BORDERS. TAPIAS SAID THAT,
SINCE ALF OF COLOMBIA'S TROOPS ARE COMMITTED TO
PROTECING INFRASTRUCTURE AND BORDERS, INCREASED MOBILITY
WILL BE CRUCIAL FOR THE OTHER HALF COMBATING ILLGAL
ARMED GROUPS. (NOTE: THE ARMY CURRENTLY ONL HAS 25
HEAVY HELICOPTERS AT ITS DISPOSAL. THE 53 PLAN COLOMBIA-
FUNDED HELICOPTERS CURRENTLY IN COUNTRY -- OF WHICH ONLY
33 ARE OPERATIONAL -- ARE DEDICATED ONLY TO
COUNTERNARCOTICS OPERATIONS. END NOTE.) MR. MACKEY,
INVESTIGATIVE COUNSEL FOR THE HIRC, SAID THAT TAPIAS'S
HELP WOULD BE CRUCIAL TO MAKING A STRONG ARGUMENT IN
FAVOR OF EXPANDED AUTHORITY.

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION: KEEP TERRORISM OUT OF THE
CITY

5. ALSO ON APRIL 3, THE DELEGATION WAS BRIEFED BY VICE
MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION FEDERMAN QUIROGA RIOS ON THE
MINISTRY'S HIGHWAY SECURITY PROGRAM, A JOINT PROJECT OF

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED PTQ2039

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 03435 02 OF 02 162009Z
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| | AC-01 | DCP-01 | ACE-00 | TEST-00 | ASDS-01 | DSCC-00 | NFAT-00 |
| | SAS-00 | /004W | | | | | |

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R 162008Z APR 02
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8177
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
NSC WASHDC
DOSAIRWING PATRICK AFB FL
DIA WASHDC//NMJIC//
USCINCSO MIAMI FL//SCCC/SCJ2/SCJ3/SCJ5//

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 3

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED UNCLASSIFIED
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 2002BOGOTA03435

Page: 4

Channel: n/a

DIRONDCP WASHDC
CIA WASHDC//CNC//
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY GRENADA

UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 BOGOTA 003435

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UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 03435 02 OF 02 162009Z
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SUBJECT: VISIT OF CODEL BALLENGER

THE MINISTRIES OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEFENSE TO EXTEND STATE PRESENCE ON THE NATION'S HIGHWAYS AND PREVENT TERRORIST INCURSION FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE TO THE CITY. THE MULTI-FACETED APPROACH CONSISTS OF ELITE MOBILE POLICE UNITS, LICENSE PLATE CAMERA TRACKING SYSTEMS, AND INCREASED HIGHWAY PATROLLING. SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN MAY 2001, THE PROGRAM HAS RECORDED AN IMPRESSIVE RETURN OF 15 PESOS OF CONTRABAND RECOVERED FOR EVERY PESO INVESTED. NEARLY 100 HIJACK VICTIMS HAVE BEEN RESCUED AND 59 ATTEMPTS HAVE BEEN FOILED. OVER 1.2 MILLION MILES HAVE BEEN DRIVEN AS PART OF THE PATROLS. THE USG HAS REQUESTED APPROXIMATELY USD 3 MILLION - FOR CAMERAS AND VEHICLE MAINTENANCE - TO SUPPORT THE PROGRAM.

PETROLEUM SECTOR: PIPELINE SECURITY

6. THE PRESIDENT OF THE COLOMBIAN STATE OIL COMPANY, ECOPETROL, ALBERTO CALDERON AND THE PRESIDENT OF OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM IN COLOMBIA, GUIMER DOMINGUEZ, BRIEFED THE DELEGATION ON THE IMPACTS OF TERRORIST ATTACKS ON THE CANO LIMON PIPELINE AND THE PROPOSAL FOR DEVELOPMENT OF AN INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION PROGRAM IN ARAUCA. THE LOSS TO THE COLOMBIAN ECONOMY FROM ATTACKS ON THE PIPELINE LAST YEAR IS AN ESTIMATED 0.5 PERCENT OF GDP - NEARLY USD 500 MILLION. BOTH REPRESENTATIVES SAID COLOMBIA MUST BE PERCEIVED AS REPAYING THE INVESTMENT THAT THE USG MAKES. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT THERE IS A PROPOSAL TO CREATE A "LOCKBOX" FOR THE INCREASED REVENUES

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 4

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED **UNCLASSIFIED**
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 2002BOGOTA03435

Page: 5
Channel: n/a

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 03435 02 OF 02 162009Z
SO THAT THEY WOULD BE USED FOR SOCIAL INVESTMENT OR
SECURITY ISSUES.

8. COMMENT. DURING HIS JANUARY 2002 VISIT, REP.
BALLENGER TOLD US THE SUBCOMMITTEE WAS INTERESTED IN
DRAFTING COUNTERTERRORISM LEGISLATION FOR THIS
HEMISPHERE. THIS VISIT, THOUGH SHORT, WAS VERY MUCH
FOCUSED ON TERRORISM-RELATED ISSUES. BOTH MEMBERS AGREED
THAT SOME EXPANSION OF U.S. AID TO ENCOMPASS
COUNTERTERRORISM EFFORTS WAS DESIRABLE, THOUGH THEY WERE
CAREFUL NOT TO MAKE PROMISES OR DESCRIBE THE SPECIFIC
FORM SUCH AID MIGHT TAKE.
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Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 5

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